AOOS
Alaska Ocean Observing System

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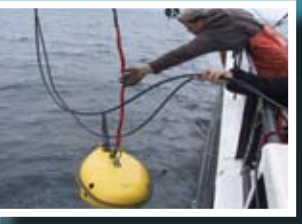
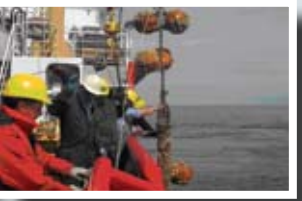
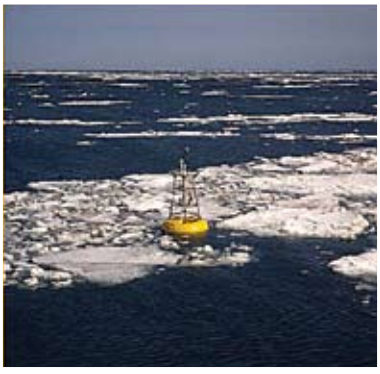




Record Shattering Summer for Arctic Sea Ice

On September 16, 2007, Arctic sea ice reached the lowest level in the 28-year satellite record—an annual minimum extent of 4.13 million square kilometers, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC). This shatters the previous record from September 21, 2005, of 5.32 million square kilometers, and was over 1.6 million square kilometers below the long-term average calculated over the years 1979 to 2000. An area north of the Chukchi and East Siberian seas, roughly the size of California (about 450,000 square kilometers), was completely ice-free for the first time. For more about the disappearing sea ice, visit the NSIDC Arctic Sea Ice News Web page. ■
http://nsidc.org/news/press/2007_seaiceminimum/20070810_index.htm



Arctic Sea Ice and Ocean Information System Priorities for 2008-2010

During its fall meeting, the AOOS Board approved a conceptual design for the program's 2008-2010 coastal and ocean observing priorities. Visit www.aoos.org to view both the overview and more comprehensive design. These priorities became the foundation of the funding request sent to NOAA in early December. AOOS Regional Coastal and Ocean Information System is the highest priority. This project focuses on acquiring, displaying, and archiving the most important marine data in Alaska; broadening website access and developing new visualization and decision-making tools; expanding access to processed remote sensing data of ocean parameters; and launching the development of an operational analysis center in Alaska. Another top priority involves continued testing of a prototype "end-to-end" system in Prince William Sound, which moves from user needs to observations to data management to modeling. Plans for a 2009 field experiment are still underway. The Board also determined that enhancing observing capacity in Alaska's Arctic nearshore region was of paramount importance. Plans call for creating a nearshore sea ice atlas, monitoring sea ice movement in three communities in real time, and greatly expanding the monitoring of sea ice thickness as the most direct way to improve sea ice forecasts. ■

Conceptual Designs Drive AOOS Priorities

To lay the foundation for determining AOOS priorities, staff focused intently for six months on creating and reviewing draft comprehensive conceptual designs, looking at the issues and products identified through the multitude of stakeholder and user outreach activities held over the past four years. They identified existing observations and models that could produce products, as well as gaps in observations and modeling. In August, these were reviewed by a Scientific-Technical Advisory Team representing a broad spectrum of expertise and geographic regions. During the workshop, the team prioritized products to be developed for the next 3-5 years on the basis of critical need and feasibility. In concert with these, the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), located at the University of Alaska, first reviewed other programs that used some form of socio-economic criteria for developing priorities and provided guidance for doing so as part of the AOOS process.

ISER and AOOS staff organized a Socio-Economic Team, which met on September 17 to develop a suite of socio-economic criteria that would serve as a second filter for reviewing the priorities. Criteria included costs, benefits, and risks. The AOOS Board met on October 2 and set AOOS conceptual design priorities for the next three years based on the recommendations and information from both the Scientific-Technical Team and the Socio-Economic Team. A paper describing this process will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. ■

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Arctic Environmental Data Exchange Roundtable

AOOS and the University of Alaska's International Polar Year program, under the leadership of Dr. Hajo Eicken, hosted a roundtable discussion on October 11, in conjunction with the International Oil and Ice Conference in Anchorage, to explore ways to share environmental data among scientific researchers, state and federal managers, and the oil and gas industry. New observing initiatives, such as the AOOS and Arctic Observing Network, as well as the International Polar Year, are resulting in significant observation efforts that should be of interest to industry from the perspective of environmental monitoring, improving design criteria for specific locations and oil-spill mitigation and response efforts. At the same time, industry is collecting environmental data that in the short- or long-term are of significant value in helping to understand and adapt to the changing Arctic marine environment. This was the first, informal meeting to explore options and to initiate an exchange among different groups collecting environmental data. The roundtable agenda, summary and a draft white paper can be accessed on the AOOS website, at www.aoos.org. The response was very positive, and the group agreed to focus on sea ice data as an initial effort. ■

Timi Vann, Molly McCammon, Zdenka Willis and Jack Harlan outside of Cordova, Alaska.

AOOS Hosts New IOOS Program Office Director

In June, AOOS hosted three members of the newly established NOAA Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Program Office: director Zdenka Willis, strategic planning director Timi Vann, and HF radar team lead Jack Harlan. The group visited the AOOS Data Management Team and HF Radar group at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and toured observing activities in Kachemak Bay (including the NOAA Kasitsna Bay Lab, the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the USFWS Maritime Refuge). The site visit ended in Prince William Sound with a ferry tour and briefings in Cordova. ■

State of Alaska Signs AOOS MOA

The commissioners of three state resource agencies have signed onto the AOOS Memorandum of Agreement, officially marking state support for the mission and goals of AOOS. The three are Commissioner Denby Lloyd, Alaska Department of Fish and Game; Commissioner Larry Hartig, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation; and Deputy Commissioner Richard Lefebvre, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. ■

Craig Dorman Steps Down as Chair of AOOS Board

With his retirement as the University of Alaska Vice-President for Research, Retired Vice Admiral Craig Dorman announced that he would officially be leaving the AOOS Board. University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences Dean Denis Wiesenburg noted that Dr. Dorman was largely responsible for the inception of AOOS, and his vision and leadership would be greatly missed. Vice-chair Tylan Schrock with the Alaska SeaLife Center will serve as Acting Chair. ■

Craig Dorman and Molly McCammon

McCammon NFRA Chair

AOOS director Molly McCammon was unanimously re-elected as chair of the National Federation of Regional Associations (NFRA) for Coastal and Ocean Observing at the organization's annual meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida in November. McCammon has served as chair of NFRA, which represents the interests of the 11 regional ocean observing associations, since its inception in 2005. McCammon also serves as a member of the Ocean Research and Resources Advisory Panel (ORRAP), a formally recognized group that gives advice to federal ocean agencies, and she was recently selected as chair of a new ocean observing sub-panel of that group. ■

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